

Thursday, November 23, 1950

Duxbury Clipper

Duxbury Rural & Historical Society, Inc.

By HERBERT E. WALKER

Our Society was started at a meeting held at the residence of the Rev. Rushdon D. Burr on what is now called St. George Street on November 13, 1883. The first President was Laurence Bradford, father of our esteemed member, Gershom Bradford. Stephen N. Gifford, the first Vice-president, was the father of our Treasurer.

Original Purpose

At the beginning, the Society's work was that of a Village Improvement Society. It is said that there is but one Village Improvement Society in Massachusetts which dates back as far as we do: the Laurel Hill Association of Stockbridge, founded in 1853. Many of the trees which line our streets were planted by the Rural Society. Street lamps were erected, watering troughs maintained and unsightly places cleaned up. The Duxbury Rural Society was incorporated February 19, 1916 and in that year Clara Smith Ripley (Mrs. Charles) gave the Historical Building and an extra lot of land to the Society. The name was changed on November 17, 1936 to the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, Inc.

Mr. Chester Winthrop Bates has continued with us in the upstairs apartment of the Historical Rooms and, although the rent is low, it is a great comfort to have such good tenants who take care of the grounds and do things about the building. Difficulty with the drainage this spring necessitated laying an overflow pipe from the cesspool southerly about 50 feet with orange pipe with a catch basin at the end. This cost \$50. and about \$75. additional have been spent for a new kitchen ceiling and other repairs.

The good work of the two Garden Clubs of Duxbury on both sides of Washington Street at the Cable Office corner has been continued through the year and it is of great importance to our town to have the entrance to our main street so well cared for. This work is done by these clubs without expense to the Society and we are very appreciative.

The gift of \$300 from Mr. Ellis W. Brewster of Plymouth towards the maintenance of the Elder Brewster site was gratefully received. We have paid Mr. Eben H. Ellison the \$300 which he generously loaned the Society without interest for the purchase of the Elder Brewster site. The matter of improvement of the site is under discussion. A sign with the words "Elder Brewster Lilacs" marks the spot. The question of excavating at the site for relics dating back to Brewster's time is also under discussion and the Plymouth people have offered to pay the cost of such excavation and divide any relics found between Plymouth and our Society. They say they would leave the site in good condition. The Elder's Lilacs site became part of the property of Marshall Soule. Buildings (probably of Soule) were shown at this location on a plan made by John S. Loring dated in 1871 and recorded in Plymouth Registry. Miss Mary N. Gifford, our Treasurer, says that Miss Elizabeth S. Sampson who died February 3, 1937 at the age of 94 years used to tell her about visiting her uncle, Marshall Soule, who lived on the Elder Brewster site. I have seen these buildings when on visits to my relatives when a small boy. The dug well can still be found among the lilacs. Two meetings of the Executive Committee have been held at the site and the opinion reflected by these meetings is that the Society should undertake to put a post and rail fence to delineate the front boundaries of the site.

Gifts gratefully received by the Society during the past year in addition to the gift from Mr. Brewster include from Rev. Herman F. Lion on October 5, 1949, 8 Chinese figures in miniature in beautiful native fabrics given by Mr. Lion's sister; from Mr. Eben H. Ellison a fireman's helmet worn by his grandfather, William Ellison, who died in 1857 and who was head of the Duxbury Fire Department 100 years ago. The helmet is marked "Ward 2"; from Elizabeth B. Hartshorn (Mrs. William N.) a painting of Partridge Academy; from Mrs. Frank A. Day of Newton a memorandum book of William Ellison of auction at Alden Weston's on September 28, 1856; from Mr. Gershom Bradford of Duxbury, various bills accounts of Capt. Gershom Bradford, 1774-1844; from Miss Grace L. Waterman (formerly loaned) a portrait of Benjamin Franklin, Esq.; from Edith G. Downs of Wollaston and Brant Rock, a photograph of Ford's Store; from Edith T. Sears a booklet written by Frank Ellison entitled "Trip to Duxbury."